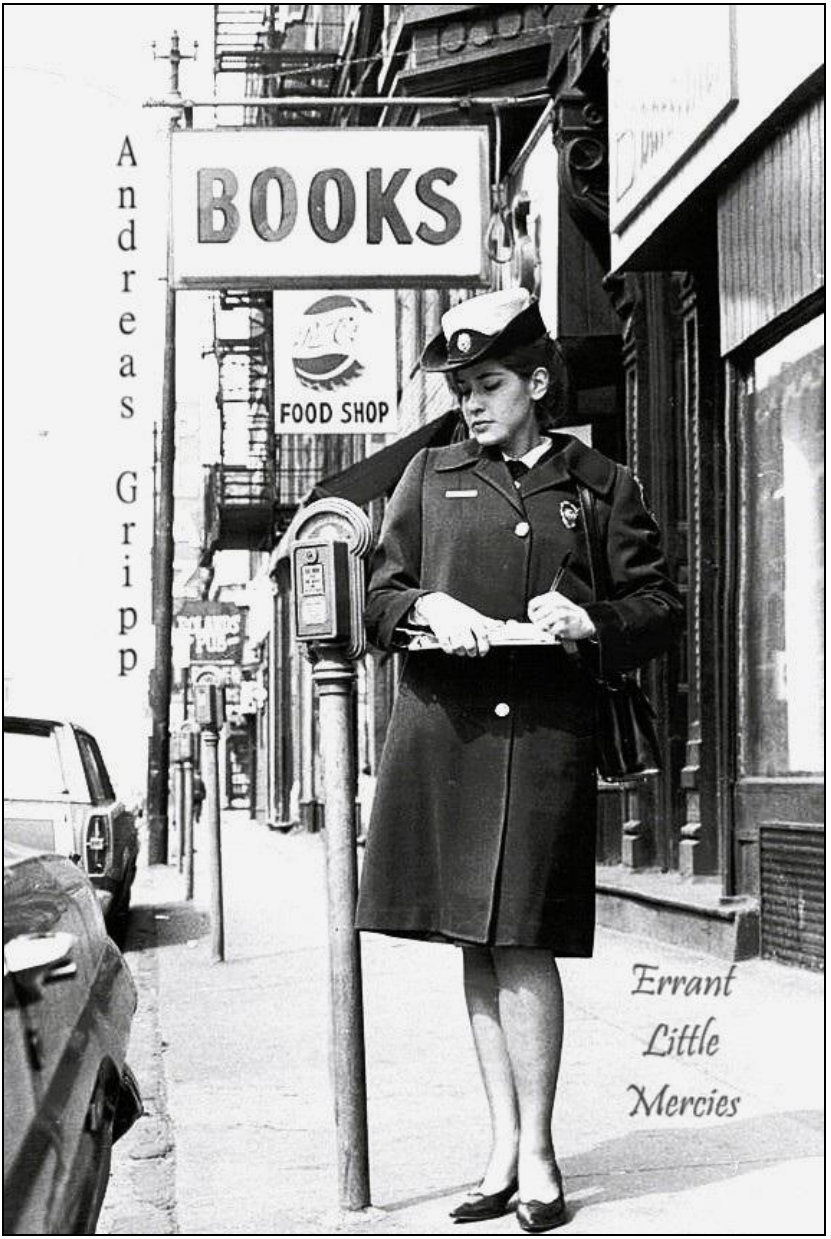
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Errant Little Mercies

Andreas Gripp

Silver Starling Press

ESSEX COUNTY

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Author Email: andreasgripp@gmail.com
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andreasgripp.wixsite.com/andreasgripp

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NOTES

The **metacarpus** is the group of five bones of the hand between the wrist and the fingers.

Käthe is pronounced Kayta. **Untermensch** is German for "subhuman" and was used during the Holocaust.

Rauchkäse is a German smoked cheese. **Gvina Levana** is an Israeli white cheese.

A **Claddagh ring** is a traditional Irish ring that signals love, loyalty, and friendship.

Venera were a series of Soviet probes which explored the planet Venus.

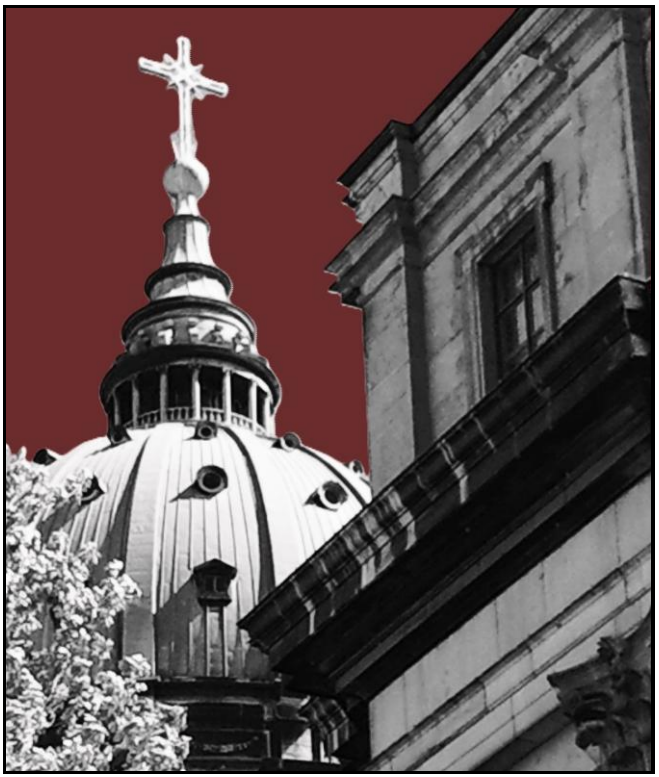
Backward masking was the practice of encoding messages into popular rock albums via song lyrics so that when the records were played in reverse, previously hidden words would be revealed to the listener. Led Zeppelin's *Stairway to Heaven* was said to contain *here's to my sweet Satan.* **Zeppelin** airships were filled with hydrogen until the 1937 Hindenburg crash in New Jersey.

Easter is taken from the pagan festival **Ēostre,** named after a Germanic goddess of Spring.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

24 of these 30 poems were penned between April 3rd and 23rd, 2025. The other 6 are fresh reworkings of recent or older offerings which seemed to fit right in. I approach every new book I write as if it may be *finis.* Living for me is like this as well. Take care out there.

—Andreas
May, 2025



Metacarpus

What is the glint
that's peeking from your
pocket, your feet
along the bank? Is it the
transpicuous green
of glass, or from a stone
too jagged
to be skipped—

etched into your
palm
with every closing
of your fist, among
the varied *cul-de-sacs*
of everything
you've lost:

this way to your children,
that way to your spouse,
the imprint from your ring
that's gone

a pallid roundabout,

going everywhere
and nowhere all
at once, wishing they were
rivers
instead of roads,
water far more
faithful
than what's paved,
always leading somewhere
not a ditch, not the crunch
of tangled metal,

channels
in your hands
that bore the tears,
like the feet
of crows
embedded
by your eyes,
laugh lines
on your face
that stop cold dead.

Käthe, Among the Swallows

You walk in awkward
solemnity, gazing
upon the grass
as if it's trees, and you
above their crowns—
more than half a mile
in the air,

watching out for needles
so you say.

It's not as bad
as that—not *here,* the addicts
raked away
as rumpled leaves,
no green
from which to give,

another *Untermensch,*
something
kicked aside
when in our path.
Never queried
why they're here
or if they're loved.

When someone's
out of mind
they're out of sight.
Like the girl
you were
in Bavaria,
ever-looking down
among the blades,
for something
left behind
by wary birds,

thinking that a pair of
single feathers
would somehow lift you
off the ground, well
above your father
like the kite that
got away
when he was drunk,

blaming *you,* your
clammy hands,

the only part of
you
he wouldn't touch.

Gambol

There's a single
footprint
in the freshly laid
cement
across the street.

It's in the very
centre
of the 12′ x 12′
now hardened
concrete pour.

Someone took the time
to smooth it out
before the jump. Maybe
with a darbie or a trowel.
The look of morning snow.
Frosting's crown of cake.
Just to be defaced
by an errant leap.

The imprint
has been frozen like a
fossil. A shoeless
3½. A child with their
toes amid the muck,
hopping six feet *out*
to a patch of
green. An Olympian-to-be
in ’32. Brisbane’s
kangaroos
to watch & marvel.

But back to our
little brat
who wiped their
sole onto the grass,

pulled their sock
& shoe
back to their place,
strolled in bogus
innocence to school,
to study every shape
& depth of form,

what can last
forever
or but a *day,*
learn that people
stare in awe
at wondrous things,
concoct a tale
or poem
on how it possibly
came to be.

With Thanks to My Electrician

The light switch
in the bathroom is
somewhat tilted, off-kilter
with every purple
square of tile,
the baseboard
that's the footer
to symmetry.

I ponder this
before I flick it
off. Maybe our apartment

is the thing that's crudely
angled, haphazard,
the fruit of inattention.

Maybe the *switch*
is the one: that's
truly perpendicular.

Maybe *I* am
slanted
in the clone of
looking glass,

its mirrored
misalignment
of the world.

Maybe I've wasted
money
on my chiropractor/
quack. That Hugo's Quasimodo
was the king of proper
posture,
that Pisa's leaning
tower
is the only thing we've
made that's not
askew,

that we stand
upon the earth
with shoulders *slouched*—
like *italics,* despondent
in defeat,

our use of lines &
levels—the blind that lead
the blind, groping
in the black, mewling
we can tell the
straight from crooked.

Dirge for the Late of April

The woods across the road
had begun to bud then
stopped.

Yes-yes, another bloody verse
about the leaves
which are to waken. But this time
it is different—

they seem as they were
in March, in the promise
of that scented week of
Spring, locked in their
globule green,

as if they'd some-
how put their feet
upon the floor, felt its morning
chill, said to hell
with expectations;

the snap of
cold to come—

when a furnace is long
in the molars, has died
from another *slew*
of unpaid bills.

Or perchance it's *nothing*
at all to do with sleeping in;
that the din
of saws & pruners
will do little to
rouse them forth,

that they took
a single look
upon our landscape,
knew we'd gotten
worse throughout the
Winter, yawned at all our
vows
to finally change, be a
blight no more,

rolled over on their
sides
in slow defiance,

their bed of bark
a harbor for the
buntings & the squirrels,
the children
climbing trunks,

will unfurl
their verdant blooming
in their dreams in which
we're gone.

Caffeine

For the price of a
cup of coffee
you can…

no, I need that supposedly
expendable cup.

Do not belittle
its worth
to my morning drill.

I realize
I'd save the world
if I only gave it
up—hunger
to be no more,
a kid to go to
school instead of
eking it out on the
street,

and that Bibi
and Hamas
would embrace as
dear old friends—

and BTW,
valiant, brave reporter
on the lines of
genocide:
if I bought your
wanted java
I'd be surely
left without—

cranky, eyes two
Samsonites,
stuck in a shitty
airport, its vending
machine fresh out
of Arabica beans,
depriving me of my
early morning joe—

no, not Obama's
Joe the plumber, but
Joseph, master of
his brothers
down in Egypt,

who when asked
to drop a pigment
from his multi-coloured
coat, told them to
go to hell;

or Jesus' earthly
father, unable to
hammer wood
without his shot
of rise & shine,

pleading with his
son
to change the water
to espresso, an elixir
he could never
live without.

Meter Maid

Lovely Rita, meter maid,
nothing can come between us
—The Beatles

The parking meter has ripped me off
again. Granted, a quarter doesn't buy a lot
these days, 12 minutes
in the crumbling core,
and there's little I could have done
in that paltry span:

watch a victim score some meth, perhaps,
or a behemoth lumber towards me
with his biceps freshly inked;

or maybe spy the hoodied teen
in front of the *Cash and Dash,*
with all of the windfall
from a senior's cheque.

Shaking this rusty contraption
accomplishes nothing—

neither does thrashing
the part that promises
each Sunday will be free—
which does me no *good*
on this middle-of-the-week
kind of moment.

I'm *yearning* for the world
that's gone *away,* in which Petula
Clark had sung to go *Down-*
town;

storefront *windows*
filled with stock,
the bustle of suits and dresses,
a cop directing traffic,
with seldom a skateboard seen.

I would have waited
for *Lovely Rita*
to arrive,
the heat from her sultry sway,

her expunging this metal rogue
of the piece of *change*
it stole from me,

saying it *buys* a leisurely stroll,
a chance to see the sun
ascend its zenith,

with plenty of time for coffee
at the shop around the corner,
or maybe *lunch* and herbal tea,

that she'll join me
once she's dispensed with
all her tickets.

Celebrities

We don't need the
athletes to survive.
Their million-dollar
payouts
just to dunk a
rubber ball.

And the actors?
Please. We shouldn't
give a fuck
for what they're wearing.
Their vermilion,
gaudy carpets.

We could *thrive*
without the farmers
if we didn't have to eat.
A piddling
note of foot
that keeps us honest.

We could even *live*
without our doctors—

eyes glued
to anatomy
books, with brandy
and a biting stick—
but then we'd need
to know the laws of
fermentation, of
shucking, whittling wood
without the splinters,
making pliers
for their removal
if we fail.

But not the *poet*.
For how else would we
know the raven's caw
that cuffs our ears
is but the sweetest
hymn from heaven we'll
ever hear?
That one-and-one
make three in love
and war?

That the worm
around your finger
is the snake from
Eden's mist,
recoiling
from our touch
when it is dry,

when it is wet
they creep to
orchards, remind
us of our need
for damning fruit.

And Then You Wonder Why I Drink

Don't write
when you imbibe,
they said. Love
in a billion
tongues. But
only when you're
sober.

We won't make it
to the '30s.
Depression's
2nd coming:

thief and
philanthropist

rapist
and the raped

lifeguard
and the drowned

kid that's
Black or White.
Trans
or patent cis.

Hasidic
or Buddhist Jew.
Vegan
& Halal.
Indigenous
& not.

Don't even
scrawl obligatory
notes about the
Tutsi.

Leave your
errant little mercies
at the door.
Your tears for
Fritz the cat.
The Witch
charred at the stake.

Once a little
girl
named Rosa Moore.

Over forty
thousand skulls
in old Dachau.
We're all *skeletons*
in the end.
Our bones
to strike a drum
in humid night.

On the Art of Humblebrag

I'm so *honoured*
to announce
my very latest
publication. In the journal,
High Prestige.
Among so many
gifted poets—I'm un-
worthy to *unstrap*
their Birkenstocks.

Please don't think I'm
boasting. Waving in the clouds
for your attention. A skater's
triple axel.

I'm that *sobbing*
tax collector. At the back
of the Author
Temple, who softly
beats their breast—
not daring to lift their
eyes toward the sky,

be seen as another
braggart
by the Lords of
Literature.

BTW, my brand-new
book of poems
has been accepted
by Blowhard Press.
With my fellow
penitents. Please order
ahead of time—

I've been practicing
my *signature*
in advance, will scrawl
my meekest name
upon the white
of Title page,
dedicate it to your
dog,

the one which jumps
about, snatches
a golden frisbee
in the air, barks in
great humility
that its human
is the one
who gets the credit.

The Spectrum

I know you are
empathic. No gradient
on your scale of
grace & pity.
All of us are *brown*
on the colour
wheel. It's only a case of
shade

and the only shade
germane
is beneath a tree,
a bulwark from the
sun
that burns on both
the bad & good.

As for the tree
itself, it doesn't mean
a thing
that it's been leafless.
Nothing is too dead
beyond redemption.

There are bugs
which call it home.
Sleep the cold away.

No one is so small
they can't be saved
I've heard you sigh.
Playing lifeguard
for mosquitos
in the pool, your breath
against their wings,
your love
upon their size, though knowing
if given the chance
they'd bleed you dry.

Juxtapositions

I pluck the *olives* from the
salad and that makes it less than
Greek. You ask me if they're green
or black and I state
it makes no difference.

I replace the blocks of feta
and consider *German-Jew.*
It's *been* an oxymoron
since nineteen-thirty-three.
I'll blend some smoky *Rauchkäse*
with an aged *Gvina Levana—*

swap my baseball cap
for a yamaka
in *case* you take offense.

Now bring me beer from Bavaria
and hot latkes from the slum.
I'll gladly prove
what *cannot* go together
is just a fallacy of
thought:

A frown is a smile
that's standing on its head.

Feet are a pair of hands
which are unwilling to clasp
in prayer.

Toes are very cognisant
that fingers are more graceful—
so they *never* stretch for the sky.

Unable to grant any light of its *own,*
the moon is but a mirror for the sun
in which to worship its own reflection
(and we thought that
Dorian Gray
was the one who's really vain).

What is *ugly,* anyway?
Is it the absence of beauty
or too much of it all at once?

Tearing Out the Nettles

My love is not
a flower, it's a weed.

Line of schmaltz
aside, a bloom
is an affront to
what I hold.
Its vivid scent &
colour
fall away
amid the gusts—
of 50 mph,
the coming of the
frost by mid-
October.

But even when it's
warm
it lets you down.
Sags in burning
sun, when the kisses
from the clouds
are soaking wet,

too much lust at
once;

while the weed
remains devout,
its crab
amid the grass,
its lion
of the lawn, enduring
in the breath
of bounding child,
its seed & float of
white—landing
by impatiens—

which have never
learned to wait
beyond the freeze,
winter's cashing
out.

Look beneath
the soil
and I'm there,

rooted
to the heart of
sister earth,

her ever-faithful
zeal, *unequivocally*
arisen, again & again &
again,

without some
caveat,

the fear
that you will kill it
where it stands.

The Claddagh Ring

You lost it in
the bathtub. Too
close to the *swirling*
suck of drain. Water's
little magnet
to the sewer.

A circle is devoid
of birth & death.
That's why
we place a
ring around a
finger. Forever
started long
before our bones
had coalesced.
Survives the
dust-to-dust
of mourning chant.

I will make
another—easier
to spot
amid the bubbles.

It will *float*
upon the surface
to your side,
should an errant
stretch of wrist

bring about its *fall,*
from its perch
beside the bottle
of L'Oréal,
the one that's
scented green,
like the forest
where I made
a new replacement,

a twig that hugs *itself,*
twist-tied like the things
we used to keep our bread
from air, in 6th or 7th grade,
knowing everything is
prone to getting stale—

even *friendship, love,*
and loyalty,

meeting beneath the
tree
upon the summoning
of a bell, the circle on the
wall which wielded
power to command:

our goings, our comings,

locked within some
ember
of your waning
memory, my every stoke of
fire having failed,
nothing left to forge
once all its breathy
strands of smoke
have petered out.

On the Fall of William James

I've always
overblown
my heart's confessions,
what I'd *do* for you,

screaming from the
mountains
every minstrel
boasts they'd climb,
bunions and the bite
of frost be damned,

not staying within
the white lines of
my lane—pragmatic,
très réaliste,
the matter-of-fact
approach
that douses fire,

having never
sailed the path
of jumbo jets,

the ears of
elephants,
some tri-head, King
Ghidorah.

But maybe that's
my problem—no one
wants the lies
they want the fears,
of what can
surely happen off the
ground,
though there is no
grand seduction
with the plain of
John or Jane.

Still, overshooting
landings
is much better than
falling short, like some
bardic Evel
Knievel,

beyond the stodgy bounds
of *play-it-safe*,

like the frog
that leaps the
lilies of the pond,

every splunk
unseen, only
spreading ripples
from where it's been,

our eyes too slow
to catch its mid-air
flight, its reckless
show of love.

Ingénue, or she went the light ekphrastic

and rejected every Rembrandt,
surrealist *Salvador,*
even Warhol's
tomato soup;

had no stomach
for van Gogh's
ear, Pollock
a breaded fish;

knowing Picasso
had no rhythm,
da Vinci
without a rhyme,

while her solitary
Rockwell:

I always
feel like

somebody's
watchin' me

as she pushed her
4B pencil
into the thin
of *onion* skin,
the only brittle
canvas she could use,
to see what lay
beyond her present
muse,

becoming her own
afflatus, stick people
hooking their hands—
like monkeys in a barrel,

page after page after page

as if the paper
could not end,
begging the pungent
farmers
to plant more bulbs,

pleading for us all
to bite our tongues—
every single word
a thousand pictures.

Venera

You grumble
that it's humid.
You're drooping
from the flashes
of the night &
nothing else.

I've felt
the melt of foundries,
the rooftop
hauling shingles
in the sun, the searing
of a pan
without my glove.

I watch you *sag*
across the room
clad in a charcoal
negligée, like you wore
when you were 20,
just for the
sheer excitement
of it all.

Darling, I'm afraid
this will not do it.
Diaphanous
always comes
with a *best-before.*
Please go back &
don your flaxen blouse,
the one that's
darned with wool,

we'll play amid the
cool of cards & cribbage—
there'll be no need
for fans.

You see, I heard the weatherman
of the Soviets
back in 1976, say the broiling
Venusian surface
is 400-plus degrees—
Celsius, so it sounded
not-so-hot;

right before I *steamed*
our shaggy carpet,
our stains of love
imbibed
without a sweat.

Heels Over Head

The novel I've just read
was printed upside-
down. You say I'm a *buffoon,*
one too daft to know
it was simply held amiss,
by one hundred
and eighty degrees
upon my lap—my feeble
attempt at humour.

I say that's not the case.
I tried it the common
way, and everything
in the story was
upended. The dialogue
was English
yet it wasn't. Sounded
like a bygone backward
mask. Satan on the
steps of *Zeppelin.*
Sweetest in a heaven's
feasting flame. The folly
of hydrogen. There
in our every breath.

Someone in a top hat
had shuffled in reverse
upon the ceiling,
like a love-struck
Fred Astaire. But nothing
had been fastened
to the floor. There weren't
any nails within this
author's outlandish world—
not even Elmer's Glue.
Yet all
had stayed together
till the close.

When I chose to do a
headstand,
at last it made some sense.
Nothing
is inverted
up in space. All of us
together
are a fleck,

gasping &
adrift throughout
the cosmos.
We're there
and do not know it.
There's no need
to launch a rocket,
boast we've made
it home.

Try it for yourself—
I vow to turn the pages,
find you the
fluffiest pillow
in the room. One with
a trillion feathers.

Then scream
your bloody lungs out
at the end. Tell me then
and there that I am stupid.
Tell me there and then
it could be funny.

Dog Sitting

The dog won't let me
type this tangled poem.

She's doing what any other
dog would be doing at
this instance:

whining, yelping, walking back
& forth beside my feet,
parked at my writing desk.

This was an unfortunate time
to choose to scribe an epic.
If I was as wise as I pretend,
I would have surely
condensed this exercise
to the length of trite haiku.

Maybe it's not too late.
Maybe I can ditch
the whole crust-of-the-
Earth kinda thing, the blight
from a brand-new virus,

the expulsion
of Hispanics
and that fifty-thousand
Gazans

no longer join the
rest of us in breath.

100,000 ears:
now deaf to the coo of doves
in chalky skies

Damn, it's not quite
right—it surely needs
some sculpting, a refinement
of the words &
syllables,

but it's something
that cannot happen
at the moment:
my guest that yaps
away,

barking
in my earshot
that her truth means
more than mine
and always will:

her empty water
dish, the fact her
bladder's full,
her treats upon the
floor like broken
bones.

Innocence

When I was a child,
I declared that meat was grown
in fields, between the rows
of golden grain, though I knew
that wasn't true.

They can nurture
it now in labs, I've heard,
making *prophetic*
my naïveté.

But back then, my Christ
was somewhat kinder—
all had enough to eat,
on that holy, grassy knoll,
and twelve baskets
were brought back up—
loaves only, not a martyred
fish in sight.

If you looked between the clouds
you would see them, I said,
as if that too were sea
and you could travel anywhere
and breathe.

Daniel

I'll put up with it
once a year,
tie the wormy
laces of my
Converse,

not to look
respectable
but to ensure
I will not trip
around the altar.

The priest is
wisely guided
by the Spirit's
Holy voice,
by the pages
of gilded gold,

a den of hungry
lions, Revelation's
Book of Life,

the blood of
bleating lambs.

I've been reading
on my phone
the average lion
has 30 teeth—4
enormous canines—

by which to *clench*
its struggling prey,
kill it with a crunch,
then gleefully
tear its carcass,
devour its pulsing flesh.

Yes, I choose to love
a *cat*

more than anything
else in the world.
And yes, I'll offer
raucous cheers
whenever the mouse
is in its mouth,

but I humbly have
an issue
with the fate of un-
believers, how the favoured
of the Christ
come out on top,
despite their weekly
pledge
that they repent
but never do,

this mercy un-
deserved, the bug I
pluck from the spider's
gluey lattice,
this biased, cold
salvation—

and though it's
cruel to the arachnid,
the creep of slow
starvation, its nom de
guerre is *grace,*

a biblical
sobriquet,

but I know it
by an epithet
I cannot wail
out loud,

despite the people
right behind us in
the pew, singing their
shitty guts out to
the Lord.

Immortality

I lament I'll
be forgotten
once I'm gone.
Failing to be
the poet
I had hoped.

There are worse
things in the world
than not remembered.
Hitler will always be
cited. Just like
Genghis Khan.
I prefer my name
to *never* be spoken again,
than as the inventor
of atomic bombs,
a Gacy-esque
killer clown,
or for my recipe for
fish-in-a-flan.

So what
if no one reads
my witless poems,
a hundred years from now?
I'd rather be
some forlorn Alexander

than one who says he's Great,
his ego beyond
control, seizing
all the lands
outside his vista.

It's better I decay
in anonymity, no one to
further my flaws:
sneer my hair
was disarrayed like
Phyllis Diller,
spout I drank
until the dawn,
ink upon my fingers
like the blood of every
baby in Judaea,

ever-striving
to pen a verse
a million kids
will chant by rote,
unaware that
there's a missile
with a name etched
on its way.

Ēostre

Animals are innately
atheist—or so I've always
thought. Until you said *the*
Easter Bunny came,
the drop of chocolate eggs
amid the hops. I say
it must be pagan
more than Resurrection
herald. That there's
no room for its *luck*
in hymn or prayer—
its severed,
dangling foot
glued to a chain.

The Catholics speak of
fish come every Friday,
their sacrificial scales,

while camels have been
caught between Epiphany's
visitation, the Missives of
Allah.

You tell me of the
cows in deep Calcutta,
their soul of mother-
hood, there amid the Vedics
and the Jains.

But only the cats of
Cairo got it right. The *bowed-to*
not the bowed. They excel
at being *still,* kissed &
praised & pampered,

more so than
that spider in descent,
this would-be acrobat—
there within the flowers,
its viscous little weave,
vicious & vampiric,
yet clinging to the
loved among the leaves,
its octagon of legs
that fuse unused,

like boats moored at a
dock before the catch,

with nothing to do
but sit like a Buddhist
monk, ponder if the
blood is really worth
its weight in breath,
this sticky, staid
existence,

if *it's* the one
who's captive
in its web.

Night & Day

The night
should never be feared.
It's been a faithful kind of
friend who's been misread,
oversees
our bodies' healing

in our sleep,
allows our belovèd
passed to come & visit
in our slumber.

Our pupils swell
like grapes when dark
has seeped, this black that
never burns
or blinds our sight,
the stars like
counted sheep,
remind us of our
place in this expanse;

for it's in the high of *day*
that cancer lurks in
every ray, when the red
of spilling blood
is clearly seen,

when the
damage from the storm
is cruelly tallied,
that the dead
are stacked in heaps
up to the sun—
so far and
yet so close
in lifted light.

Spumante Bambino

You read about the twins
cojoined at the tongue—
one who preferred the
sour, the other only
sweet—what a pain
that was when they
opted for Italian,
spaghetti before spumante,
gelato in-between.

Oddities. Those who spurned
the offers from Ringling
Bros. Convinced
cash & notoriety
were a waste of peculiar
gifts.

The heavy, bearded baby
with beetle brows.
Able to chalk the
drawings of Cro-
Magnon.

Spoke a
fluid French
before she walked.
Had never set a
foot in gay Paris.

The boy who
was struck by lightning
seven times. Whose touch
was said to waken those
from coma. Atoms leaping
fervently
from his fingers.
Conductor of the stygian,
grumbling clouds.

The girl
with a double
navel; single, centred
eye—whose cry
was a howl of hunger
upon her birth,
her vision 90/20,

able to eat her weight
in pizza pie,
see the kneaded dough
through plaster walls.

Or the man
who had the hiccups
36 years, 11 months,

18 days, 22 hours
and 15 cumbrous seconds,

astonishing the
planet with his
ability to speak the
language of the air.

The Decoy

My hunter friend,
the one I haven't converted
to my "animals have feelings too"
frame of mind, uses
a wooden decoy
in an attempt
to lure some ducks,

the painted, smiling duplicate
successful
in its duty:
three already *shot*,
bagged and ready to carve.

If objects had living souls,
I wonder how it would feel:

a *traitor*,

causing the *death*
of what it mimics,

floating on water
like a wannabe bird,

even feign it could fly
if it *wanted* to,
have its pick
of choicest mates;

like *Pinocchio,*
eager to be turned
into the real
thing,

hoping its rifle-bearing
Gepetto
will make it
flesh and bone, allow
a brook of blood to pump
throughout
its winding veins,

pray it might *even*
bring salvation
to this hunter's
calloused heart,

spot a chance
at its own redemption,

have its maker
see its feathered shape
as something
more than food.

The Misanthropes

When he said he can't
be racist, that he hates every-
one *equally,* we called
him on his bullshit.

Afterwards, I wondered
if we're worse. Our spirits
like an anvil from a
plane, one that stops
all hearts in its descent,
whenever we see one
coming with her infant,
knowing we surely
cannot hate such
innocence

yet we do.
I think of *plunge* then
plunger. You add
they're like a pluggage
in the pipe. Wish they'd go
away with a single
flush.

And then there was the
time we said we'd shut
our eyes for good,
channel Houdini's
inner child, making
everyone disappear
including us, ashamed
throughout our trudge
from being foiled.

Thomas Alan Waits

That big fucking bomb made me deaf
—Tom Waits, *Hell Broke Luce*

I must apologize
for my critique. Poking fun
at all things Waits:
his stupid, slanted hat,
cliché cigarette,
his voice akin
to a Muppet—

more gravel
than the dust
off sideroad 5.

Makes a brooding
Leonard Cohen

sound like
Aaron Neville
in compare.

I abhorred the
whined falsettos
of Brothers Gibb,
thought disco
was the pits;

but here I sit & mull,
if there's something worse
than dancing with
your finger to the ceiling,
feigning that you're happy
& that it's sky.

Poem

What ceremony of words can
patch the havoc?
—Sylvia Plath

While the
Sudanese
were starving,
a million
for every hour
of the day
(the orphans
in encampments,
the blind
with amputees),

I complained
about the holes
in rubber gloves,
of bubbles
on my brow,
of washing break-
fast dishes—

the hardened
yolk of egg, stuck between
the tines
of silver forks.

Well, they aren't
really silver. Just some
faux argent. Almost
takes an hour
to scrub 'em clean,
elbows aching madly
from the grease.

And then there's Sylvia Plath…

It makes no sense at all that
Keats and Yeats
have never rhymed.

I don't mean
that each had never
used the form in poems,

I mean the names them-
selves, aren't what they
seem to be:

"Keets" as in *meets,*
"Yates" as in *mates,*

although neither
ever *met* their fellow bard,
they couldn't have been
good *friends*—
in the English sense
of the word, being a pair
of generations
apart.

Perhaps it's the
Anglo/Irish
dynamic,
the died-in-his-
blooming remembrance,
like a poetry's *Jimmy Dean,*
struck *down* within his
prime, that draws me at once
to Keats,

while William Butler
paraded
his grey & glasses—
between the wars
to end all wars—
had much better things
to write of than
Grecian Urns,

an unrequited
love, for instance,

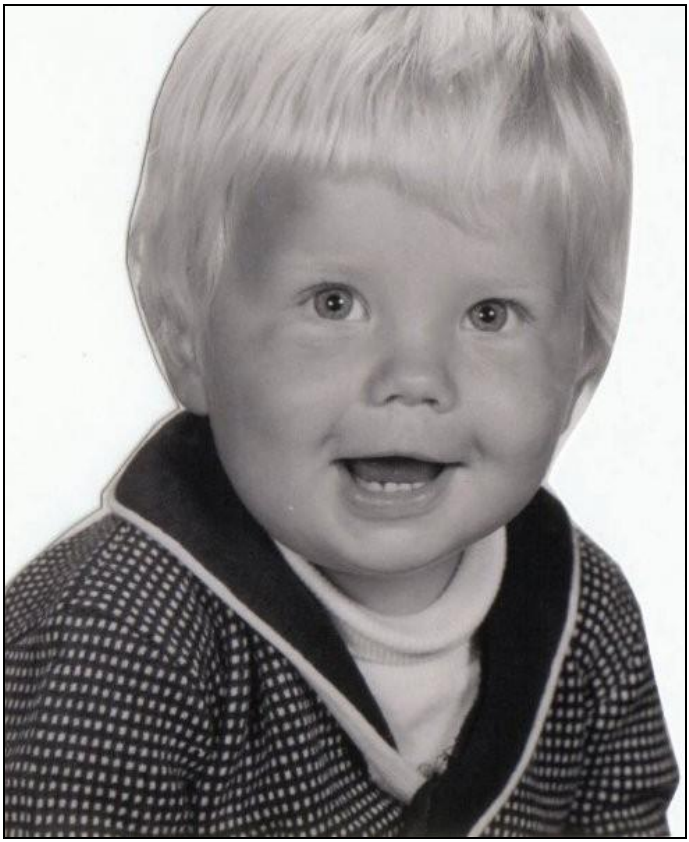
a *Maud* that rhymes
with *God*—

no-no,
not Monsieur
Rimbaud, he's a
beast of another
kind,

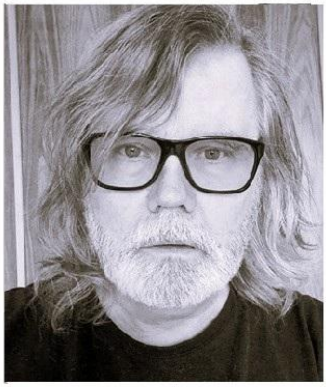
a poet in a class
of his own, whose name's
not apropos,

except to say that *he,*
like Keats and Dean and Plath,
knew *when* to cash the chips,
consider the straw that *broke*
to be the very final one,

be buried in his beauty,
forever be
forever young.



Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in 2024 relocated to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of over 30 books of poetry, including *Clocking the Equus: Poems Selected and New* (2025). His poems have been praised for their lyrical and literary merit, accessibility, and for their blend of comic and poignant storytelling.



A long-time Londoner, Andreas Gripp now lives in Essex County along the shores of Lake Erie with his wife, Carrie. He has written over 30 books of poetry. His poems are inspired by the contemporary experiences of both common & uncommon people.

Poems that journey through manifold episodes of normal and abnormal living. Expressions of love and mercy in the confuted *a priori* of our twenty-first century culture. Told in the author's lyrical style for which he's known. Or unknown. Neither really matter when it's done.

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-Richard-Yves Sitoski, Owen Sound Poet Laureate Emeritus

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